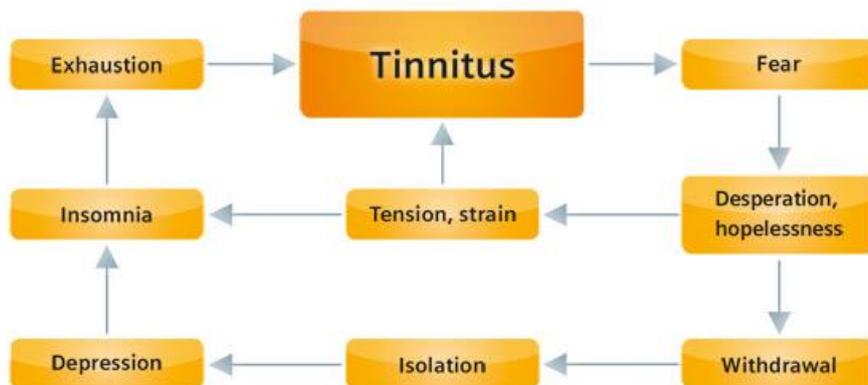


Tinnitus – Helpful Hints

New to tinnitus?

See your doctor if you have not already done so. Efforts will be made to find an underlying cause. Faulty blood pressure, for instance, excessive ear wax or high self-medication with Aspirin can be direct causes. However, often the trouble lies in the complex mechanisms of the inner ear and cannot be cured outright. What then?

Initial reaction resembles that for any other experience of loss. Feelings of shock, anger and resentment are to be expected. Frustration results from trying to explain the predicaments to others. Isolation is felt – you appear no different, yet your world seems upside down and the prospect fearful. The outcome can be mounting stress and unhappiness, described as the ‘vicious circle’ of tinnitus.



So it is important to break these vicious circles and IT CAN BE DONE, though it may involve changing the habits of a lifetime.

Let us consider

- RELAXATION
- SLEEP
- RECREATION
- DIET
- HEARING
- ATTITUDE

Relaxation

Ordinarily, this just implies “knocking off for a while” – a cup of tea, a nap, the TV ... but bodily and mental relaxation, learned under instruction then practised for brief periods, as needed, is the nearest thing to a tonic for tinnitus. Enquire about it – group tuition is best initially then tapes can be used. Complete letting-go does not come naturally to us – perhaps the best example is the domestic cat. Breathing exercises, learning where our tensions are, spending a while in an imaginary holiday situation – these are an enjoyable way of achieving positive refreshment. Some people avoid relaxing because their tinnitus then becomes more noticeable: all right, keep busy – but not frantically busy – try to do it in a relaxed, easy-going way.

HERE ARE SOME INTERESTING POINTS:

“The more relaxed the body, the more relaxed the mind”

“The more relaxed the body, the easier the symptoms get”

“The more relaxed you are, the more you can allow life to come to you without worrying about it”

Sleep

- Aim for a regular bedtime, with the last hour of the day spent quietly. Radio, taped music or a relaxation tape may help. There is a small underpillow speaker if you share a room. Herbal pillows have been recommended.
- A warm bath may help you to relax.
- Avoid sleeping at other times of the day, especially in the afternoons and early evenings.
- Avoid tea, coffee and heavy meals near bedtime, although a light snack or warm milk can prevent ‘night starvation’ and promote sleep. Experiment with a glucose drink if you wake in the night (diabetics or the overweight need to make allowances for this).
- Work at this one! Imagine your tinnitus is coming out of a radio by your ear(s). Calmly will the sound to lessen as you mentally turn the volume down slowly.
- ‘Imagery’ can help to empty an over-active mind. Put your thoughts or problems in a ‘lidded box’ once you have thought about them. Don’t keep returning to the same thing: keep the ‘box’ shut until you really need to open it again.
- However, do not martyr yourself over sleeplessness – it may be that a mild sedative for a while is required from the doctor.
- Anticipate that tinnitus can be troublesome first thing: you may prefer to breakfast on your own.

Attitude

This topic is positioned last in the hope that you may already have come to feel less alone in your misfortune. You may already have ideas you would like to contribute – that, and companionship and laughter are the basis of Tinnitus Groups, along with keeping-up-to-date on medical progress.

One needs to accept that extra stress of any kind may worsen tinnitus for a while so use it as a signal to avoid overtiredness or further responsibilities. Alternative therapies by qualified practitioners may help. Half an hour’s massage may cost no more than a meal out. Similarly, yoga, meditation and hypnotherapy (deep relaxation with positive thinking) are of benefit to many.

What else can we do to keep a positive attitude?

Laughter is not just a pleasant experience, it may be the best medicine. It has been suggested that it improves breathing and respiration. Flexing your facial muscles into a smile may produce a calming affect on your nervous system and heart rate.

When you are busy laughing you forget your problems and symptoms so try to spend as much time as possible with cheerful, happy people – they probably do you more good than any pills.